

RE: water testing story

Neal Morton

Fri 1/18/2019 2:07 PM

Sent Items

To: Robinson, Tim <tirobinson@seattleschools.org>;

I'm pretty slammed today so email would be best. Thanks,

-Neal Morton

Reporter | [Education Lab](#)
The Seattle Times

Office: 206-464-3145

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From: Robinson, Tim [<mailto:tirobinson@seattleschools.org>]

Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 2:06 PM

To: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>

Subject: RE: water testing story

Neal – I just tried to call you....but it went to voice mail. I didn't leave a message.

I thought it would be easier to talk.

Tim Robinson
Lead Media Relations Specialist
Seattle Public Schools
206-465-5404 – cell
206-252-0203 – desk
tirobinson@seattleschools.org

From: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>

Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 2:03 PM

To: Robinson, Tim <tirobinson@seattleschools.org>

Subject: RE: water testing story

Appreciate the summary, Tim.

Can you clarify which drinking water sources and non-drinking water sources I'm mixing up? If you mean the faucets at a school like Broadview-Thomson, why would they be included in the drinking water quality tests if the district does not consider them a drinking water source? Can you also detail, beyond posting a sign near the faucet, what guidance the school district provides to students to make sure they don't fill water bottles or cups from fixtures with such elevated levels of lead?

We will note the district's reliance on that aggregate pass rate in the story.

The story itself does not cite Rachel's thesis, which her advisor still stands behind. Rather, we the district's own testing data, Rachel's analysis of the numbers and my confirmation of her findings.

Do I attribute everything you included in this email to Seattle Public Schools, or you as a spokesman?

Enjoy coffee with Joy next week,

-Neal Morton

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From: Robinson, Tim [<mailto:tirobinson@seattleschools.org>]

Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 1:55 PM

To: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>

Subject: water testing story

Neal – Since you're done gathering information from us, let me just offer this summary statement from SPS.

- Your data is mixing drinking water sources and non-drinking water sources.
- For drinking water/drinking water sources in SPS schools, the pass rate for all drinking water fixtures at all schools is 99 percent. After a 30-second flush, the passing rate is 99.7 percent.

- By pass rate I mean: the lead ppb is under 10ppb. A huge number of fixtures are under 5ppb.
- The source you cite – Rachel Freeman’s master’s thesis – is flawed. Among other errors, it contains erroneous information and is presented improperly: she, too, mixes drinking water sources and non-drinking water sources – despite the fact that her thesis is titled “*Drinking Water Quality in Seattle Public Schools.*” We met with Rachel and showed her the mistakes in her work; we are also going to be letting her advisor know.
- We agree that it would be clearer on the website to make sure and distinctly label each table (rather than assume the reader follows the established order).

Given all the questions you asked Richard...all the emails exchanged... I think this is a case of missing the forest for the trees. It looks to me like the simple fact that our water quality is outstanding is going to be overshadowed by headlines (I think)...a lead (according to you)...copy that indicates SPS has problems with the drinking water supplied to students. We unequivocally do not.

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